



No. 1,053. ONE PENNY. [Registered at the G.P.O. as a Newspaper.] LONDON, SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15, 1901. Publishing Offices, MILFORD LANE, STRAND, W.C.

A Weekly Newspaper for All Classes.

ESTABLISHED 1843. PRINTED BY THE PROPRIETOR, CHARLES ARNOLD, AT THE "DAILY NEWS" PRESS, MILFORD LANE, STRAND, W.C.

Subscription prices: 6d. per copy; 3s. 6d. per quarter; 12s. per annum in advance. Single copies 6d. each.

Advertisements: 10 lines for 1 week at 1s. 6d. per line; 10 lines for 1 month at 5s. 0d. per line; 10 lines for 3 months at 12s. 0d. per line; 10 lines for 6 months at 21s. 0d. per line; 10 lines for 1 year at 36s. 0d. per line.

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MY STRANGEST CASE

By GUY BOOTHBY.

AUTHOR OF "DR. NIKOLA," "THE BEAUTIFUL WHITE DEVIL," "PHAROAH," "BOOTHBY," &c.

CHAPTER I.

It has often struck me, as being a remarkable circumstance that, in nine cases out of ten, a man's success in life is not found in the career he originally chose for himself, but in another and totally different one. That mysterious power, "force of circumstances," is doubtless responsible for this, and no better illustration for my argument could be found than my own case. I believe my mother had a premonition to follow the medical profession, while my mother hoped I would enter the Church. My worthy uncle, Clutterfield, the eminent solicitor of Lincoln's Inn Fields, offered me my Articles, and would possibly have eventually taken me into partnership. But I would have none of these things. My one craving was for the sea. If I could not spend my life upon salt-water, existence would have no pleasure for me. My father threatened, my mother wept. Uncle Clutterfield prophesied all sorts of disasters, but I remained firm.

Very well," said my father, when he realised the further argument was hopeless, "since you must go to sea, go to sea you certainly shall. But you mustn't blame me if you find that the life is not exactly what you anticipate, and that you would prefer to find yourself on dry land once more."

I willingly gave this promise, and a month later left Liverpool as an apprentice on the ship *Maia* of Normandy. Appropriately enough, the captain's name was Fairweather, and he certainly was a character in his way. In fact the whole ship's company were originals. Had my father searched all England through he could not have discovered a set of men, from the captain to the cook's mate, who would have been better calculated to instil in a young man's heart a distaste for Father Neptune and his oceans. In the number of the various books of the sea I have encountered, was one entitled, "A Floating Hell." When reading it I had not expected to have the misfortune to be bound with a vessel of this type. It was a lot, however, to undergo the experience. We carried three apprentices, including myself, each of whom had paid a large sum for the privilege. I was the youngest. The eldest was the son of a country parson, a mild, decent lad, who eventually deserted and became a house-painter in the South Island of New Zealand. The next was washed overboard when we were rounding the Horn on our homeward voyage. Poor lad, when all was said and done he could not have been much worse off, for his life on board was a disgrace to what is sometimes erroneously called "Human Nature." In due course, as we cleared for San Francisco, and long before we crossed the line, I was heartily tired of the sea. In those days, few years ago as it is, sailors were not so well protected even as they are now, and on a long voyage aboard a sailing ship it was possible for a good deal to happen that was not logged, and much of which was forgotten before the vessel reached her home port again. When I returned from my first voyage my family inquired how I liked my profession, and, with all truth, I informed them that I did not like it at all, and that I would be willing to return to shore life once more, if I could be so permitted. My father smiled grimly, and seemed to regard the considerable satisfaction from the fact that he had prophesied disaster from the outset.

"No," he said, "you have made your bed, my lad, and now you must lie upon it. There is still a considerable portion of your apprenticeship to be served, and it will be quite soon enough for us at the end of that time to decide what you are to do."

A month later I was at sea again, bound this time for Sydney. We reached that port on my nineteenth birthday, and by that time I had made up my mind. Articles or no Articles, I was determined to spend no more of my life on the sea. I had been shipwrecked, and I was a free man. Accordingly, one day having obtained shore leave, I purchased a new rig-out, and leaving my sea-going togs with the Jewish shopman, I made tracks, with all my savings, into the Bush with all speed. Happen what might, I was resolved that Captain Fairweather should not set eyes on George Fairfax again.

From that time onward my career was a strange one. I became a veritable Jack-of-all-Trades. A station hand, a rouse-about, shearer, assistant to a travelling hawker, a gold-miner, and at last a trooper in one of the finest bodies of men in the world, the Queensland Mounted Police. It was in this curious fashion that I arrived at my real vocation. After a considerable period spent at headquarters, I was drafted to a station in the Far West. There was a good deal of horse and sheep-stealing going on in that particular locality, and a large amount of tact and ingenuity were necessary to discover the criminals. I soon found that I was a business at which I was likely to be successful. More than once I had the good fortune to be able to bring to book men who had carried on their trade for years, and who had been entirely unsuspected. Eventually my reputation in this particular line of business became noised abroad, until it came to the ears of the Commissioner himself. Then news reached us that a dastardly murder had been committed in the suburbs of Brisbane, and that the police were unable to obtain any clue as to the identity of the person accountable for it. Two or three men were arrested on suspicion, but were immediately discharged on being in a position to give a satisfactory account of their actions on the night of the murder. It struck me that I should like to take up the case, and with the confidence of youth, I applied to the Commissioner for permission to be allowed to try my hand at unravelling the mystery. What they thought of my impudence I cannot say, but the fact remains that my request, after being backed up by my Inspector, was granted. The case was a particularly complicated one, and at one time I was beginning to think that I should have no more successful than the others who had been. Instead of deterring me, however, this only spurred me on to greater efforts. The more I thought I had asked to be allowed to take part in the affair, had aroused the jealousy

of the detectives of the department, and I was aware that they would receive the news of my failure with unqualified satisfaction. I therefore prosecuted my inquiries in every possible direction, sparing myself neither labour nor pains. It would appear that the victim, an old man, was without kith or kin. He was very poor, and lived by himself in a small villa on the outskirts of the city. No one had been seen near the house on the night in question, nor had any noise been heard by the neighbours. In the morning he was discovered lying on the floor of the front-room, stabbed to the heart from behind. Now every detective knows—indeed it is part of his creed—that in an affair such as I am describing, nothing is too minute or too trivial to have a bearing upon the case. The old gentleman had been at supper when the crime had been committed, and from the fact that the table was only laid for one, I argued that he had not expected a visitor. The murderer could not have been hungry, for the food had not been robbed. That the motive was not robbery was also plain from the fact that no drawer had been opened, or a lock forced, while the money in his pocket was still intact. The doctors had certified that the wound could not have been self-inflicted, while there was plenty of evidence to show that there had not been a struggle. From the fact that the front-door was locked, and that the key was in the murdered man's pocket, it was clear that the assassin must have left the house by the back. There was one question, however, so trivial in itself that one might have been excused for not taking note of it, that attracted my attention. As I have said, the old man had been at supper from behind, and when he was discovered by the police next day, his overturned chair was lying beside him. This, to my mind, showed that he had been seated with his back to the door when the crime had been perpetrated. When I had examined everything else, I did not pay attention to the chair. I did not want to take to me anything, yet it was from it that I obtained the clue that was ultimately to lead to the solution of the whole mystery. The chair was a cheap one, made of white wood, and had the usual smooth strip of wood at the top. On the back of this piece of wood, a quarter of an inch or so from the bottom, on the left-hand side, was a faint, almost illegible impression of the blood set in the wood. When found, the chair had been exactly eighteen inches from the body. The mere fact that the man had been stabbed from behind and to the heart, precluded any possibility of his having jumped up and caught the back of the chair afterwards. Placing my left hand upon the piece of wood above-mentioned, to discover that a portion of the second finger fell exactly upon the stain.

"Now I think I understand the situation," I said to myself. "The old man was seated at the table, about to commence his meal, when the murderer entered from behind, and, with his left hand behind him, he raised his left hand upon the chair to steady himself while he aimed the fatal blow with his right."

But in that case how did the knife touch the middle finger of his left hand? From the fact that the body was discovered lying upon its back just as it had fallen, and that the wound reached to the heart, it was evident that the blood must have got there before, not after, the crime was committed. Leaving the room I went out to the yard at the back and studied the paling-fence. The partition which separated the yard from that of the house next door, was old, made of a very flimsy material, while that at the bottom was new, and was armed at the top with a row of bristling nails. Bringing the powerful magnifying-glass I had brought with me for such a purpose, to bear upon it, I examined it carefully from end to end. The result more than justified the labour. A little more, and I should have discovered another small smear of blood. There could be no doubt that the man had cut his finger on a nail as he had climbed over on his murderous errand. The next and more important thing was to decide how this information was to be made useful to me. Since nothing had been taken from the house, and the old man had been quite unprepared for the attack that was to be made upon him, I set the whole crime down as being one of revenge. In that case what would the assassin be likely to do after his object was attained? Would he vanish into the Bush forthwith, or get away by sea?

After I had finished my inspection of the place, and the hope of finding out whether a man with a wounded hand had been seen in any of them on the night of the murder. I was totally unsuccessful, however. No one recollected having seen such a man. From the hotels I went to various chemists' shops, and with the shipping-offices connected with the lines of steamers leaving the port, but with no more luck than before. The case seemed rapidly going from bad to worse, and already it had been suggested that I should give it up and return to my duty without further waste of time. But as you may naturally suppose, I had no desire to do so. I worried myself about it day and night, giving it a great deal more attention in fact than I should bestow upon such a matter now, or even upon cases of twice the importance. If there had been nothing else in my favour, my attention to duty should have been sufficient to have commended me to my superiors. I had the other way round, however. The Press were twitting the authorities concerning their inability to discover the murderer, and more than hinted at the inefficiency of the Detective Force. When I had been engaged upon the matter for about a fortnight, and with what success I need hardly say, the Commissioner sent me, and told me that he did not think my qualifications were sufficient to warrant my being employed longer on the task in hand. This, coming upon the top of all the hard work I had been doing, and possibly my nervous system, led me to say, more than I intended. Though a man may have the bad luck to fall in a thing, he seldom likes to be reminded of it. It was certainly so in my case. Consequently I was informed that at the end of a month my connection with the Queensland Police would terminate.

"Very well, sir," I said, "in the meantime, if you will give me the opportunity, I will guarantee to catch the murderer and prove to you I am not as incapable as you imagine."

I have often wondered since that I was not ordered back to the Bush there and then. The fact remains, however, that I was not, and thus I was permitted to continue my quest undisturbed.

Ever since I had first taken the affair in hand I had had one point continually before my eyes. The mere fact that the man had been stabbed in the back seemed to me sufficient proof that the assassin was of foreign origin, and that the affair was the outcome of a vendetta, and not the act of an ordinary bloodthirsty crime. The wound, so the doctors informed me, was an extremely deep and narrow one, such as might very well have been made by a stiletto. Assuming my supposition to be correct, I returned to the house, and once more overhauled the dead man's effects. There was little or nothing there, however, to help me. He had laid himself out to conceal the identity of his enemy, he could scarcely have done it more effectively. Baffled in one direction, I turned for assistance to another. In other words, I interviewed his left-hand neighbour, a lady with whom I had already had some slight acquaintance. Our conversation took place across the fence that separated the two properties.

"Do you happen to be aware," I asked, when we touched upon the one absorbing topic, "whether the unfortunate gentleman had ever been in Europe?"

"He had been almost everywhere," the woman replied. "I believe he was a sailor at one time, and I have often heard him boast that he knew almost every seaport in the world."

"I suppose you never heard him say whether he had lived in Italy?" I inquired.

"He used to mention the country now and again," she said. "If it was a fine morning he would sometimes remark that it was a perfect Italian sky. But nothing more than that."

I was about to thank her and move away when she stopped me with an exclamation.

"Wait one moment," she said, "now I come to think of it. I remember that about three months ago he received a letter from Italy. I'll tell you how I came to know it. I was standing in the front verandah when the postman brought up the letters. He gave me mine, and then I noticed that the top letter he held in his hand had a foreign stamp. Now, my little Willie, collects stamps; he's tired of them now, but that doesn't matter. At that time, however, he was at work with them, and he could talk of nothing else. Well, as I was saying, I noticed this stamp, and asked the postman what country it came from. He told me it was from Italy, and that the letter was for the gentleman next door. The next time I see him, I said to myself, 'I'll ask him for that stamp for Willie.' I had my opportunity that self-same minute, for just as I was going down the garden there to where my husband was doing a little cabbage-planting, he came into his front verandah. He took the letter from the postman, and as he looked at the envelope, I saw him give a start of surprise. His face was as white as death when he opened it, and he had no sooner glanced at it than he gave a sort of stagger, and if it hadn't been for the verandah-rail I believe he'd have fallen. He was so taken aback that I thought he was going to faint. I was standing where you may be now, and I called out to him to know whether I could do anything for him. I liked the man, you see, and pitied him for his loneliness. What's more, he and my husband had always been on friendly terms together. Well, as I was going on to say, he didn't answer, but pulling himself together, went into the house and shut the door. When next I saw him he was quite himself again."

At last the case was beginning to look more hopeful. I thought I could see a faint spark of light ahead.

"Did you happen to say anything about this to the other detectives when they were making inquiries after the crime had been committed?" I asked, with a little anxiety.

"No, I did not," she replied. "I never gave it a thought. It was such a long time before that murder, you see, and to tell the truth I had forgotten all about it. It was only when you began to talk of Italy and of his having been there, that I remembered it. You don't mean to say you think that letter had something to do with the man's death?"

"That is just the different question to answer," I observed. "I think, however, it is exceedingly likely it may have had some connection with it. At any rate we shall see. Now will you think for one moment, and see whether you can tell me the exact day on which that letter arrived?"

She considered for a few moments before she answered me.

"I believe I can, if you will give me time to turn it over in my mind," she said. "My husband was at home that morning, and Willie, that's my little boy, was very much upset because I would not let him stay away from school to help his father in the garden. Yes, sir, I can tell you the exact date. It was on a Monday, and the third of June."

I thanked her for the information she had given me, and then went off to see what use it was likely to prove to me. The letter from Italy had been delivered in Brisbane on the third of June. The murder was committed on the night of the nineteenth of July, or, in other words, forty-six days later. With all speed I got off to the office of the Royal Mail Steamship Company, where I asked to be shown their passenger-list for the vessel that arrived on the nineteenth of July. When it was handed to me I scanned it eagerly in the hope of discovering an Italian name. There were at least a dozen in the steerage, and one in the first class. I was relieved to observe that I had at least the first-class passenger had disembarked at Cairns, further up the coast. The name of the exception was Stefano Gairdi, and he was a passenger from Naples.

"You can't tell me anything more definite about this gentleman, I suppose?" I said to the clerk who was attending to me. "Did you happen to see him?"

"He was in here only this morning," the man replied.

"Here, when?" I inquired, with such surprise that the other clerks looked up from their books at me in astonishment. "Do you mean to tell

me that the gentleman I am asking about was here this morning?"

"I do," the reply came. "He came to book his return passage to Italy. He only undertook the voyage for the sake of his health."

"Then it's just possible you may know where he is staying now?" I asked, not however with much hope of success. "If you can tell me, I shall be under an obligation to you."

"I can tell you that also," the young man answered. "He is staying at the Continental Hotel in Adelaide Street."

"I am more obliged to you than I can say," I returned. "You have rendered me a great service."

"Don't mention it," said the clerk. "I am very glad to have been able to give you the information you required."

I thanked him once more and left the office. Now if Mr. Stefano Gairdi happened to have a cut or a mark on one upon the inside of his left hand, I felt that I should be within measurable distance of the end of the affair. But how was I to get a view of his hands? If he were the man I wanted, he would probably be on his guard, and he had already proved himself to be sufficiently acute to make me careful how I went to work with him. He had no time to lose, however. The next boat for Europe in two days' time, and he had booked his passage in her. For that reason alone, I knew that I must be quick if I wished to accumulate sufficient evidence against him to justify the issue of a warrant for his arrest. Accordingly I walked on to the Continental Hotel, and asked to see the manager, with whom I had the good fortune to be acquainted. He was shown into his private office, and presently he joined me there. He was familiar with my connection with the police force, and laughingly remarked that he hoped I had not called upon him in my official capacity.

"As a matter of fact that is just what I am doing," I replied. "I want you to give me some information concerning one of your guests. I believe I am right in saying that you have an Italian gentleman, named Gairdi, staying at your hotel?"

"That is certainly so," he admitted. "I hope there is nothing against him?"

"I am rather soon to say that," I said. "I am suspicious of the man, and I want to ask you a few questions concerning him."

"As many as you like," he returned. "I cannot say, however, that I know very much about him. He has been up the country, and only returned to Brisbane yesterday."

"Is this the first occasion on which he has stayed here?" I inquired.

"No," the manager replied. "He was here nearly a month ago for a couple of nights, and he had his room reserved for him while he was away."

"Perhaps you can tell me if he slept here on the night of July the nineteenth?"

"If you will excuse me for a moment I can soon let you know," said the manager, and then crossed the room to go into an outer office. A few moments later he returned and nodded his head. "Yes, he slept here that night, and went to Toowoomba next day."

"One more question, and then I have done. Did you happen to notice that night, or before he left next day, whether he had hurt his left hand?"

"It's strange that you should speak of that," said the manager. "He had cut his left hand rather badly with a broken glass, so he told us. We gave him some sticking-plaster to do with."

"That will do beautifully," I said. "And now perhaps you will add to the kindness you have already done me by letting me see the gentleman in question. I don't want to speak to him, but I want to impress his countenance upon my mind."

"Why not go into lunch?" the manager suggested. "You will then be able to study him to your heart's content, without his being any the wiser. You're not in uniform, and no one would take you for a detective."

"An excellent idea," I replied. "By the way, while I am upon the subject, I suppose I can rely upon your saying nothing about the matter to any one?"

"You may depend upon me implicitly," he answered. "I should be scarcely likely to do so, for my own sake. I trust the matter is of a very serious one. I should not like to have any scandal in the hotel."

"Well, between ourselves," I observed, "I am afraid it is rather a serious one. You will then be sure I will do all I can to prevent your name or the hotel's being mixed up in it."

Then, as he had proposed, I followed him into the dining-room and took my place at a small table near the window. At that adjoining me, a tall, swarthy individual, with close-cropped hair, an Italian without doubt, was seated. He glanced at me as I took my seat, and then continued his meal as if he were unaware of my presence in the room.

By the time I had finished my lunch I had thoroughly impressed his face and personality upon my memory, and felt sure that, if necessary, I should know him anywhere again. My labours, however, were by no means over. In fact they were only just beginning. What I had against him so far would scarcely be sufficient to justify my applying for a warrant for his arrest. If I wanted to bring the crime home to him, it would be necessary for me to connect him with it more closely than I had yet done. But how to do this? I had got off to the office of the Royal Mail Steamship Company, where I asked to be shown their passenger-list for the vessel that arrived on the nineteenth of July. When it was handed to me I scanned it eagerly in the hope of discovering an Italian name. There were at least a dozen in the steerage, and one in the first class. I was relieved to observe that I had at least the first-class passenger had disembarked at Cairns, further up the coast. The name of the exception was Stefano Gairdi, and he was a passenger from Naples.

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"That will do beautifully," I said. "And now perhaps you will add to the kindness you have already done me by letting me see the gentleman in question. I don't want to speak to him, but I want to impress his countenance upon my mind."

"Why not go into lunch?" the manager suggested. "You will then be able to study him to your heart's content, without his being any the wiser. You're not in uniform, and no one would take you for a detective."

"An excellent idea," I replied. "By the way, while I am upon the subject, I suppose I can rely upon your saying nothing about the matter to any one?"

"You may depend upon me implicitly," he answered. "I should be scarcely likely to do so, for my own sake. I trust the matter is of a very serious one. I should not like to have any scandal in the hotel."

"Well, between ourselves," I observed, "I am afraid it is rather a serious one. You will then be sure I will do all I can to prevent your name or the hotel's being mixed up in it."

Then, as he had proposed, I followed him into the dining-room and took my place at a small table near the window. At that adjoining me, a tall, swarthy individual, with close-cropped hair, an Italian without doubt, was seated. He glanced at me as I took my seat, and then continued his meal as if he were unaware of my presence in the room.

By the time I had finished my lunch I had thoroughly impressed his face and personality upon my memory, and felt sure that, if necessary, I should know him anywhere again. My labours, however, were by no means over. In fact they were only just beginning. What I had against him so far would scarcely be sufficient to justify my applying for a warrant for his arrest. If I wanted to bring the crime home to him, it would be necessary for me to connect him with it more closely than I had yet done. But how to do this? I had got off to the office of the Royal Mail Steamship Company, where I asked to be shown their passenger-list for the vessel that arrived on the nineteenth of July. When it was handed to me I scanned it eagerly in the hope of discovering an Italian name. There were at least a dozen in the steerage, and one in the first class. I was relieved to observe that I had at least the first-class passenger had disembarked at Cairns, further up the coast. The name of the exception was Stefano Gairdi, and he was a passenger from Naples.

"You can't tell me anything more definite about this gentleman, I suppose?" I said to the clerk who was attending to me. "Did you happen to see him?"

"He was in here only this morning," the man replied.

"Here, when?" I inquired, with such surprise that the other clerks looked up from their books at me in astonishment. "Do you mean to tell

me that the gentleman I am asking about was here this morning?"

they don't hear of George Fairfax before very long. I'll be off to London and try my fortune there."

Next day I made my way to the Great Metropolitan, and installed myself at a small private hotel, while I looked about me preparatory to commencing business. To talk of gaining a footing in London is all very well in its way, but it is by no means so easy a task to accomplish as it might appear. Doubtless it can be done fairly quickly if one is prepared to spend large sums of money in advertising, and is not very touchy on one's own trumpet on every possible occasion, but that is not my line, and besides, even had I so wished, I had not the money to do it. For a multitude of reasons I did not feel inclined to embark on such a risky enterprise. I preferred to make my way by my own diligence, and with that in view I rented an office in a convenient quarter, furnished it, put a small advertisement in a few of the papers, and then awaited the coming of my clients.

As I have a long and curious story to tell, and this book is only intended to be the narration of a certain episode in my life, a detailed description of my first three years in London would not only be superfluous, but in every way a waste of time. Let it suffice that my first case was that of the now notorious Pilchard Street Robbery, my success in which brought me hither from a well-known firm in Hatter's Court.

As the public would doubtless remember, they had been robbed of some valuable gems between London and Amsterdam in a singularly audacious manner. My second was the case of the celebrated Russian swindler, who called herself the Countess Demikoff. This case alone took me nearly three months to unravel, but I did not grudge the time, seeing that I was well paid for my labour, and the police managed to succeed where the police had failed. From that time forward I think I may say without boasting that I have been as successful as any man of my age has a right to expect to be. What is better still, I am now in the happy position of being able to accept or decline business as I choose. It is in many respects a hard life, and at all times is attended with a fair amount of risk, but you cannot wonder at my not being without breaking eggs, and if any one chooses to spend his life running to earth men who are waging war against Society, well, he must not grumble if he receives some hard knocks in return.

After these preliminaries I will proceed to show how I came to be mixed up in the most curious case I have ever been my good, or evil, forerunner. It showed me a side of human nature I had not met before, and it brought me the greatest happiness a man can ever hope to find.

(To be continued.)

THE UNDERGROUND HELD UP.

A friend of mine was telling me the other day how an underground train he was on got stalled in some way between two stations in the pitch darkness. He was alone in his compartment and could get no information as to the cause of the delay. The air was stifling, and he began to fancy things, and to fret. Being a fearfully nervous fellow he was soon on the edge of hysteria. He stuck his head out of the window, now on this side, then on that, and was rewarded for his trouble with two lungs full of cold gas. That made him choke and groan. Finally, about a year afterwards (so he figured the time), the train "got a move on" and landed him in at King's Cross. He had actually been in the tunnel only fifteen minutes, but the experiment shook him from head to heel. Save for one thing he thinks it would have turned his hair grey—he is bald as a green apple.

The point is—a bad time is always a long time. Perhaps you have heard that before. All right—it's true, and costs you nothing. It is why Mrs. Thomas Randall, about five years ago, went through a twelvemonth that was like a dozen of the average sort. She says it was dreadful. Yet it all happened in and around her own home at Wyckbold, near Droitwich, and you wouldn't have noticed anything gone wrong there.

On the 16th of May last (1901), Mrs. Randall wrote a fit letter on the subject, which you can read in a minute. "I always had the look of a strong, healthy woman," she says, "yet I was not what I seemed to be. You must know I had to be very careful as to what I ate and drank. In spite of all my care, however, the indigestion got more and more of a hold on me. I can truly say it was cruel; my life was a torment."

"Nothing I ate would properly digest. My food appeared to go to my chest and stop there. Of course I knew it did not really stop there, but I say it felt so, and oh, the discomfort and pain it gave me; I wouldn't wish it to my worst enemy. For hours the food acted as if it were lodged, as I have said. It was as though everything had piled itself up into a heap and then swelled and expanded until my poor chest was nigh to bursting with it."

"Neither did the trouble content itself with that, it hurt me in other ways. I got to having bilious attacks and bad headaches. Often I would belch wind, and was worried by a fluttering sensation at the heart."

(Inside these brackets let me say it again—what I've said a thousand times—and now do try to remember it. This kind of headache is caused by indigestion poisons in the blood, and the heart fluttering by gas which fills the stomach and presses against the heart. Our indigestion and you get rid of both.)

"I saw a doctor," continues Mrs. Randall, "and tried various medicines that were recommended to me, but no good came of anything and I went on in the same miserable way."

"Then help came, as it commonly does, unexpectedly. The postman was the ministering angel this time, although he was probably quite unaware of the part he played. In plain English, he brought us two little books about Mother Seign's Syrup. Reading them stirred me up to try it."

"Before I got through the first bottle I had much less pain after eating, and felt brighter and better than I had for a long time, and three bottles put me right. That is four years ago, and since then I have got along without medicine of any kind."

"There is no mistake about Seign's Syrup; it is the best of all tonics; it makes life seem fresh and new, and drives away the dizziness that make the world such a dreary place for us mortals. I write this with my husband's full consent, and we have no objection to your publishing it for the benefit of others."

(Advertisement.)

LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL.

At the weekly meeting it was agreed to contribute £2,500, one-half of the net cost of widening Brompton rd.—A draft was submitted by the Parliamentary Committee of a Bill providing for the new lines and extensions of tramways and street improvements already sanctioned by the Council. The Bill included a clause providing for a special betterment rate being levied on public-house property in the vicinity of the Hampstead rd. improvement, in view of the fact that two public-houses were included in the property which would be removed.—After a long discussion, a motion that this clause be omitted was carried.—A Bill providing for the construction of a subway from the Victoria Embankment to Holborn, and an electric tramway therein, was approved.—A motion for the submission of the General Purposes Bill of plans for the purchase and

less children have very weak

it is far better to let them choose, as the ladies need no special support.

Black and brown stockings make a very leg look slim. Pale blue and yellow have the same effect. A thin leg looks best in stockings of grey, pearl grey, fawn, white, or a flesh colour. Stripes have a thinning effect. Checks and plaids have a contrary tendency. Black shoes are of all the most becoming, giving the legs so Black stockings are infinitely more becoming if the feet than brown.

Obtaining the details of dress which are made at home I may mention is a very easy matter. I have just seen one of a brown velvet with a drum centre, the double frills were machined with a silk, and lined with cream. Dainty frills of cream lace under the velvet frills.

The Constance Dress is a useful pattern for a plain cloth dress. The material used in our illustration is a cheviot plaid with bands of trimmings. Each seam of the skirt is strapped with the braid, and one row around terminating at the front seams. The new bell-shaped sleeves are also trimmed with the braid, as also are the revers, and the front of the smart little bodices, which is double-breasted and shows a tiny little nest of silk at the neck.

Low necked boleros of real lace, with elbow sleeves of the same, are much worn. Other puffed blouses of crepe, or other materials, are much worn. All the newest coats and jackets have seemed to have been made in the blouse style. Velvet blouses look very smart with trim revers and cuffs of cream satin, and are worn with guipure. Corduroy blouses are much worn just now. Boleros of all kinds are used for evening or theatre blouses of lace or velvet, and are trimmed with fur. Gaunlett blouses are fashionable. Everything is trimmed with ribbon or narrow velvet ribbon.

PATTERN ORDER FORM.
Send orders to "People's" Office, and mark envelope "Madam."

Measurement	Measure	Measure
Neck, round	Neck, round	Neck, round
Waist, round	Waist, round	Waist, round
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WITHOUT MEDICAL EXAMINATION.
FOR MALE OR FEMALE LIVES.
PREMIUMS PAYABLE MONTHLY IF DESIRED.

Apply for Special Prospectus, "Sign of the Cross," and "Woman's Charter" to the General Manager.
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N.B.—Applications for Agencies Invited.

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MONEY RETURNED IN FULL IF NOT
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Machines, etc., etc., with about 2,000 House-
hold articles, free to any address.
Special offers for Bulk (Cash) with Order.
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FREE TO EVERYONE.
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SEND NO MONEY.

IN ORDER TO INTRODUCE OUR NAME AND
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WE MAKE YOU A PRESENT
OF A LADY'S GENT'S 9-CARAT REAL GOLD-
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WE TRUST YOU.

Simply send a stamped addressed envelope, and
you will either send the jewelry or return it
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10s. 6d. received for same, and we will at once
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WE TRUST YOU.

DRAMA AND MUSIC.

GLOBE.

THE ROMANCE OF "HIDENEEK."
The "gentle dulness" which "dearly
loves its joke," fairly indicates in
the opening words of Pope's epigram
the impression which handsomely the
spirits of the audience as they filed
out of the house after "Hidenek."
on Tuesday in silence, only broken by
the few faint plaudits sounding like
the first pats of a thunder-shower.
"The Romance of a Ring," the second
title of the piece, gives a clue to the
attenuated story, serving as plot for
this nondescript production, set forth
in the programme as a musical play.
The burlesque king of an "imaginary
island in the North Sea," yet none the
less blooming with tropical plants and
flowers, holds his sovereignty by
tenure of his signet ring, conditionally
upon the crown passing from him to
his heir if he loses the amulet. Of
course, the ring is lost, stolen by his
Chamberlain in league with the
Crown Prince, and the ensuing action,
halting disjointedly through three
lengthy acts, turns upon the futile
devices of Peter Pike, a London Cock-
ney detective unshipped upon the
island, to recover the missing bauble
by tracking it to its receiver in the
person of an old miser.

The part of the detective gives Mr.
John Le Hay the opportunity of bur-
lesquing Mr. Gillette as Sherlock
Holmes; while that of the miser
no less obviously lends itself to a
travesty of the analogous charac-
ter of Despard. "The Romance of a
Ring" is a comedy, but instead of
depending upon their story, its
authors (of whom it takes three to tell
it), and as many more to set it to
music) confuse, delay, and break up
the narrative with dances, processions,
and variety "turns" having no rela-
tion to the subject. Such interjections
could be pardoned were they vehicles
for wit, humour, or fresh melody, but
such compensations are not forth-
coming. The best of the musical
numbers is a coon song by Mr. Scott
Gatty, which won an encore. Lavish
expenditure there has been in cos-
tumes and scenery, but such sumptu-
ous effects cannot compensate for
poverty of action or commonplace
characterisation. Mr. Le Hay, upon
whom the piece mainly depends, made
the most of his limited opportunities,
and Mr. Piddock showed a good pre-
sence and agreeable gifts, both as a
singer and whistler, as the Crown
Prince. Of the ladies, Miss Earle, a
pleasing singer, and Miss Cabon, an
attractive scoubrette, Miss Cabon
also rendered herself popular by her
dancing as the king's daughter.

ELPHANT AND CASTLE.

Like Father, Like Son.
Although Messrs. Norris and
Ernest E. Norris, who probably dis-
claim any idea of intending to do
more than write a plain and straight-
forward drama of a kind which makes
irresistible appeal to men of direct
and simple feelings, yet in their five-
act play just produced with abundant
indications of success they have to a
certain extent broken new ground.

Dramatic authors of the category,
which Messrs. Norris and Ernest
claim to have a place are more prone
to picture for us the irreconcilable
peculiarities of father and son, the
good man and the ne'er-do-well child,
or the honourable lad and the disrepu-
table parent.

"Like Father, Like Son" gives us
the other side of the picture. The
bluff but partner in a mining camp in
South Africa, has at home a son, Leslie
Fairfax, who inherits all the father's
best qualities, Dave Walcott, murderer
and thief, who takes the life of a friend
and seeks to enrich himself with ill-
gotten diamonds, has his counterpart
in his son, Walter, a scoundrel of the
worst type, who perpetuates all the
evil man in his father left in South
Africa. The drama is practically con-
cerned with the wickedness and
cupidity resulting from the lust of
diamonds, and as what may be re-
garded as the prologue presents us
with two murders, so the tale of
wrong-doing on the one hand and of
high endeavour on the other unfolds
itself with many a sensational scene.

The struggle between the two sons
of two such widely different men, plus
the assistance to the cause of right
of Jack Preston, one of the four partners
of the mining camp, and to the cause
of wrong of a certain Bill Sturges;
the other remaining partner, who
himself, blinded by a pistol shot
while in the act of murdering Dave
Walcott, is left to tend his
villainous strength towards the un-
doing of young Fairfax and his wife,
and, of course, the enrichment of him-
self.

It is unnecessary to follow the story
further except to say that Lillian Fair-
fax, a part admirably played by Miss
Gwynne Herbert, loses her reason
regarding it from the same cause—a
sudden shock of horror. The piece
was well staged, and in its presenta-
tion good work was done by Mr. J. E.
Pearce as Leslie and Mr. F. Joyner-
Powell as Walter; while Mr. A. G.
Leigh gave the necessary suggestion of
manly strength to the character of
Jack Preston. Mr. F. M. Paret, F.
Lacey, and G. Bernage; Miss K.
O'Connor, Miss M. Lytton, and Miss
Madge Weston were also included in
Mr. G. Leonard's capable company.

HACKNEY EMPIRE.
As with the theatre, so with the
music hall—its influence and enter-
tainment extends to every part of the
great metropolis, and Hackney is the
last district to claim a "temple of
variety" of its own. The Empire
Palace, which has been opened with
an entertainment that suggests all
that is best and brightest in this form
of recreation, stands in the well-known
March-st., to which it is certainly a
most notable adornment with its
Victorian design. Mr. Frank
Matcham, one of the most experienced
of our theatrical architects, is respon-
sible for the new structure, which is
controlled by Messrs. Empires, Ltd.,
and is to be managed by Mr. John
Christie on the two-houses-a-night sys-
tem, which is becoming every day
more popular.

As to the structure of the Hackney
Empire, the central portion of the
facade contains the entrances to the
stalls and grand circle, and above this
is an open balcony, with a bold arch
over, springing from columns, and sur-
mounted by a pediment with a finely
modelled figure holding aloft an arc-
light. Towers domed in terra-cotta,
and carrying flambeaux, flank the
main entrance, and contain the door-
ways leading to the pit stalls and stalls
above. The auditorium is one of the

finest in the metropolis, being 76ft.
from stage front to pit back, with a
width of some 80ft. in its widest part.
The stage is 80ft. wide by 40ft. deep.
The general scheme of colouring is in
cream and grey-blue, relieved by
Dunbar rose drapings and coloured
wall-surfaces. The auditorium is op-
erated and furnished in a colour
embossed plush from the architect's
special designs, and, combined with
the artistic decorations and electric
light fittings, has a brilliant effect.
The heating is by hot water process,
and all the latest designs for minimis-
ing the risk of fire have been adopted.
At the inaugural performance Marie
Kendall, Joe Elvin, and others con-
tributed, and an immense audience
assembled in the new and handsome
hall. It is evidently intended to main-
tain a high standard of excellence, for
Dan Leno, George Robey, Stratton, R.
G. Knowles, the "White-eyed Kaffir,"
and other first magnitude stars will
appear in due course.

NOTES AND NEWS.
It has been found necessary to
postpone the production of "Morocco
Bound" until Thursday, Dec. 19.
On Dec. 16 Miss Beatrice Selwyn
presents "The Green Goddess," a new
drama by Russell Vann, at the Theatre
Metropole, Camberwell.

The Grand Theatre, Fulham, will
be closed this week for the final
rehearsals of "Sinbad the Sailor," the
pantomime, to be produced on
Boxing Day at two o'clock.
"Gulliver's Travels," adapted by
George Grossmith, jun., in the form of
a children's story, to the music of Mr.
Augustus Barratt, will be produced
at the Avenue Theatre on the 23rd
inst.

The children just now will be greatly
delighted by a visit to the Crystal
Palace. The Art Galleries are filled
to their utmost extent by the piles
of the most ingenious toys and beau-
tifully dressed dolls. The Christians-

church at the PING-PONG TOURNAMENT.
The championship. The men don't
shine quite so brilliantly at the game
as the ladies, and, after all, the
amount of practice is evinced, when
the spectators see a man of over 5ft.
in height striking one moment with a
miniature baton and at a small but
evasive ball with all his strength,
and the next sees him diving under
the table after the missing object of
his determined onslaught.

"The Boom of Big Lins" takes the
place of East Lynne at the Prin-
cess and Calverly. The part of Tom
Hatchley will be in the capable hands
of Mr. Claude King, while Mr. W.
Mollison sustains that of Capt. Gal-
loway, and Miss Ada Neilson that of
Mrs. Galloway.

In lieu of a pantomime at the
Broadway Theatre, New Cross, the
managers, Messrs. Mouillot, Lock-
wood, and Calverly, will have as their
holiday attraction Miss Julia Neilson
and Mr. Fred Terry, with their com-
pany, in "Sweet Nell of Old Drury,"
who are engaged for a fortnight, com-
mencing on the 23rd inst.

Players will be glad to hear that
for his forthcoming season at the
Criterion Mr. John Hare has engaged
the services of his old and able col-
league, in "A Pair of Spectacles,"
Mr. Chas. Groves, who will again be
seen with him in this delightful
comedy, resuming his masterful im-
personation of the provincial brother,
Gregory Goldfish. Miss May Harvey
and Miss Lily Grundy are also en-
gaged to appear in the cast.

The visit of the Stock Exchange Or-
chestral and Choral Society to the
East End should be looked forward to
by lovers of the best music, who will
no doubt crowd into the Peoples'
Palace on the 19th inst., especially as
the object of the concert is to benefit a
local institution, the Bethnal Green
Free Library, whose patron is the
King, and whose president the Prince
of Wales will be had of the
Secretary of the S.E.O.S., at the Stock
Exchange, and of Mr. C. Brandon, at
the Peoples' Palace, Mile End, E.

Mr. Charles Rossow, who is now ap-
pearing at the Hippodrome, may with
justice boast that he is the
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thermore, as the town encroaches upon the country and as it has

more and more necessary for the world to escape classes to seek fresh air and find space further and further afield, the need of cheap and easy means of communication becomes more and more pressing. Electric railways and electric tramways offer the obvious solution to this problem, indeed their extension ought to be one of the most important features of the material development of this country during the early years of the new century. Communication is needed, not only between our great towns and their various suburbs, but between our great towns themselves. For instance, between Manchester and Liverpool, between Manchester and Stockport, between Rotherham, and the surrounding thickly populated district, Leeds and Bradford, Edinburgh and Glasgow mention only a few instances which strike the mind's eye, services of fast trains, attaining a speed of a hundred miles an hour, would be a boon of no forgetting value. The same applies to services, we do not doubt, before many years have passed, and our present means of locomotion will then seem well-nigh as antiquated as the stage-coach of our grandfathers—or the stogie suffocation which has so long driven Londoners to shiver on the roofs of omnibuses rather than to breathe the noxious atmosphere of our subterranean systems.

◆

CHRISTMAS AT THE FRONT.

With the approach of Christmas—the English festival above all others—the thoughts of Englishmen at home or abroad ever turn to their absent friends. Of all our Christmas toasts—save only that which we drink in silence to the memory of those who will come back no more—this one to our absent dear ones touches the chord of tenderness the most strongly. And this year, for the third successive Christmas, we shall drink it with hearts full of the thought of those two hundred thousand sons of the Empire who are fighting our battle on the blood-stained soil of South Africa. We hope that many of them will have forgotten this Christmas, by those to whom they will have looked for some little comforts to remind them of the good cheer and merriment at home. And we hope, too, that those who have the means will not have neglected to respond to those appeals which have been made to them for pecuniary aid and supplies of all sorts. It is highly valued by our gallant and hard-worked soldiers at the front. War is not all a blaze of glory, medals, and the Victoria Cross, no, it is for the most part a sordid, squalid, dirty, dull, heart-breaking business. Out on the cold veldt, in the monotony of life in a block of troops, a man is right glad of even little gifts that reminds them of home—“Few, forgotten, and lonely.” Rudyard Kipling sings of a detachment on the railway, “Not combatant only details guarding the line.” It is of these men, weary, homesick, but unbroken in spirit, that we ought to think this Christmas, and not about the Christmas prayer, that the next twelve months may find the war over and our soldiers once more spending Christmas at home.

◆

ROYAL ALBERT HALL.

Mr. Newman can certainly be congratulated on the success of the first series of festival orchestral concerts at the Albert Hall, which came to an end yesterday. The audience who assembled to listen to the final performance was a large one, and it was unmistakably enthusiastic. Mr. Wood seems to have “got the measure” of the Albert Hall, and he conducted his force strong, and he obtained results yesterday which earlier were not forthcoming. The programme presented nothing but familiar features, in that it was made up solely of excerpts from Wagner, with just a leaven of Tchaikowsky, and, as it turned out, it was when he ran, and not the German composer, who furnished the notable features of the afternoon. As we have before stated, the acoustic properties of the Albert Hall have in no respects been against Mr. Wood's splendid orchestra, but in the grandest triumph movement of the Tchaikowsky Symphony yesterday, the “affliction” figures, and its massive main theme, an effect was produced little short of overpowering. The applause was loud and prolonged, and the whole orchestra were made to rise in response. There was much else that might be noted, the rendering of the Tristan Prelude and the Tchaikowsky's Symphony, the “Pathétique” was without doubt the feature of the afternoon. Mmes. Kirby Lunn and Mr. Francis Davies were the vocalists, the former being heard to splendid advantage in “Gerechter Got” from “Rienzi,” Wagner's early opera.

◆

LATEST THEATRICAL AND MUSICAL GOSSIP.

Within a few days of the end of the year Mr. Charles Frohman will present, at the Duke of York's Theatre, Ludwig Fulda's four-act comedy, “The Twin Sister,” as translated by Louis N. Parker. One of the Battersea Polytechnic have decided to arrange a series of six special recitals on Tate organ, to be given on Wednesday evenings, commencing on Jan. 8 next.

At the Christmas Fancy Dress Ball which takes place at Covent Garden Theatre on Friday next, Messrs. Frerklende and Neil demand payment that a handsome diamond pendant shall be given to the first prize for best fancy costume.

The Brighton Alhambra anniversary will take place on Tuesday. Marie Lloyd and an enormous company will appear.

Mrs. Brown Potter is nothing if not is not original. On the stroke of the

A complimentary concert will be given at the Horse Assembly Rooms, Worthington, on Dec. 19, to T. F. F. and his once popular personal oratorio villain of those wonderful series of dramas partly written and produced by the late George Conquest at Surrey Theatre. A large and powerful company have promised their services.

TALK OF THE PEOPLE.

Sunday Morning.
The news from the front grows better and better. Some short time ago there came a noticeable decrease in Lord Kitchener's weekly tale of the enemy's losses, but now it is again increasing, and this time more rapidly than ever. Commando after commando is being shattered or mopped up, and the indefatigable Bruce Hamilton must be getting himself quite disliking by the Boer generals. We have had too many disappointments in connection with this war to feel certain of anything, but I think one is justified in believing that the end is now very near. The resumption of mining operations at Johannesburg is in itself a most significant sign of an improving situation.

The question is whether the time is not fully ripe for the Government to declare to what extent they will recognize guerrillas as belligerents. We have to consider the future of South Africa as well as the feelings of the Boers, and it is obviously impossible for any Government with a sense of responsibility to allow a kind of organized brigandage indefinitely to continue.

Is what the Boers are carrying on now warfare in the true sense? I think not. The Boers are claiming to be belligerents, but they are not. They are a disciplined, organized force which carries on its operations in accordance with certain well-recognized rules, and the force must be by officers who are able to compel their men to obey them, and not to violate the usages of civilized warfare.

Now the Boer officers have plainly lost this controlling power. We have clear evidence that when General Buller obtained a promise from Grobelaar that the wounded should be respected, that General, who, I have no doubt, was perfectly sincere in his promise, was unable to enforce the undertaking he had given. Wounded men were treated with the most shocking barbarity, and even the dying Colonel himself was not respected, though one of Grobelaar's officers remained for over an hour by his side, trying in vain to protect him from insult.

In another column reference is made to the cold-blooded murder of natives by the Boers. Everyone knows that one of the reasons why the Boer resistance is so prolonged is the fear that the natives of South Africa will be the victims of the Boer. But what amazes me is that not a word on behalf of our struggle to redeem the native from a state not much better than that of the cattle he tends comes from what used once to be the Liberal Party. It is the boast of the Radicals that they are the friends of oppressed races and the advocates of human freedom. Yet in the face of the most monstrous oppression ever inflicted upon one people by another they remain dumb or only speak to palliate the atrocities of the oppressor.

I do not remember ever having seen such expectations entertained of any statesman's speech as those which are felt about Lord Rosebery's utterance. The rights of human beings are so generally followed by disappointment, that I shall not be very much surprised if it does not turn out to be the trumpet-call which the Radicals seem to expect. Nevertheless, Lord Rosebery has a magnificent chance. If he will only throw the friends of the rights of human beings, and come out once more as an English patriot, he will restore the Opposition to something of its old place in the minds of the nation. But he must take the chance, for if he does not save his party now, I shrewdly suspect it will be his last.

By the way, I fancy the Post Office would be heartily glad if he would put his speech off for a day or two. The gale has broken down nearly all the wires round Chesterfield, and it is a great question whether, work as hard as they may, the Post Office will be able to get the wires into working order again by to-morrow night. Yet here is all the world agog to read the great speech, and somehow or other it has got to be put upon the wires, or we shall all have a sleepless night and spend it in maledictions upon the Post Office.

The most prejudiced opponent of the maintaining of the empire is the man who professes himself to be among the worst—will not refuse a tribute of praise to Mr. Long, for having successfully stamped out rabies in the United Kingdom. It may return, but in the meanwhile his war against it has been completely successful, and he deserves immense credit for the way in which he has stood to his guns through thick and thin, and faced the most extreme unpopularity rather than abandon the course which he thought right. Today he is justified by the fact that rabies no longer exists anywhere in the Kingdom, and by the peace with dogdom which he has been enabled to proclaim.

If I may venture to hark back for a moment from the dogs to whom I must humbly apologise—to the pro-Boers, I would ask them what, in their less hysterical moments, they think of the Commandant Kitchener's proclamation, declaring that certain districts of Cape Colony remain annexed. It is not very easy, in face of this proclamation, for pro-Boers to maintain that the enemy is actuated by no desire except to maintain the integrity of the territory which once was his, and never, no never, meditated anything like an aggressive war.

LATEST ELECTRIC FLASHES.

HOME.
After expert examination, it has been found necessary to strengthen the shore end of Folkestone Pier by additional works, at a cost of £60,000. From office returns, it appears that 4,304,748 pedestrians and 768,132 vehicles have used the Blackwall Tunnel during the last 12 months. Wm. Blakesmore was admitted yesterday at St. Mary's Hospital, Paddington, suffering from poisoning. He had taken opium.

Mr. Brodick, M.P., Secretary for War, completed his 45th year yesterday, and Lord George Hamilton, M.P., Secretary for India, will be 56 on Tuesday. It is reported in Liverpool that Goudie, charged with the Bank of Liverpool forgeries and frauds, had been taken seriously ill in Holloway Prison.

A patriotic demonstration will be held at the Drill Hall, Kingston, next Tuesday, Mr. Skewes-Cox, M.P., in the chair, when addresses will be delivered by Col. Legge, M.P., and Sir Fortescue Flannery, M.P. The telegraph clerks of the News Division C.T.O. and Parliamentary staff held their annual dinner at the Southampton, Chancery-lane, last evening. The chair was occupied by Mr. J. W. Francis.

The new line of the Great Western and the Great Central Railways Joint Committee, which will run from the metropolis to High Wycombe, via Beaconsfield, and eventually join the main Great Central line in N. Bucks, will be open for traffic early in 1903. At Essex Hall last night, Mrs. Humphrey Ward attended a meeting of the London Board of Missions, and gave an address on a branch of the work carried on in the University settlement in Tavistock-place, in which she is specially interested.

The Clyde shipping returns for the present year show 226 vessels, aggregating 350,000 tons, are being, or have been, launched, which is fully 40,000 tons more than last year. The prospects for next year are not quite so good. Sousa and his band sailed from Southampton for the United States. Many friends assembled to witness his departure. Princess Henry of Battenberg and her children were present at a musical concert at Southampton. Musical selections were played as the vessel steamed away.

FOREIGN.
A band of thieves have robbed a bank at Sturgis, Kentucky, and carried off \$35,000 dollars.—Reuter. The largest mail in the history of the New York post-office left New York for England yesterday. It was a large launch, which is fully 40,000 tons more than last year. The prospects for next year are not quite so good. Sousa and his band sailed from Southampton for the United States. Many friends assembled to witness his departure. Princess Henry of Battenberg and her children were present at a musical concert at Southampton. Musical selections were played as the vessel steamed away.

Princess Sophia of Greece gave birth to a son yesterday. Both the Royal mother and the infant Prince are reported to be progressing satisfactorily.—Dailist. King Leopold of Belgium, who came to Paris to visit the anticar exhibition, has passed nearly the whole of his time at the show inspecting the many new features on view.—Dailist. Mr. Clark, the American copper king, says an Exchange Telegram purchased Gottfried Preyer's famous collection of pictures for £60,000.

The Commission appointed to inquire into the Transvaal Gold Law met at Johannesburg on Friday, and took some important evidence.—Central News. A shock of earthquakes was felt at Catania, Reggio di Calabria, and Lefre. The seismic instruments at Ischia, Rome, Florence, Gattia, and Padua also recorded the disturbance.—Reuter. The Paris Memorial Diplomatique learns from London that Sir Edmund Monson, the British Ambassador in Paris, is to be raised to the peerage on the occasion of the King's Coronation.

A Joint Committee of the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives, which has been appointed to arrange a memorial service for the late President McKinley, has decided to invite Mr. Hay to deliver an address on the occasion.—Reuter. The Lieut.-Governor of the Punjab has denounced the policy of rural self-government a farce. The elections, he says, are indifferent, the elected incompetent, and public spirit non-existent, while sectarian strife is everywhere rampant.—Exchange. Mr. Merry, U.S. Minister at Managua, and Dr. Sanchez, Nicaraguan Minister for Foreign Affairs, have signed a protocol which Nicaraguan spirits and Nicaraguan wines under 14 degrees will be admitted into the United States duty free.—Reuter.

FATALITIES ON THE BRIGHTON RAILWAY.
An inquest was held at Croydon last evening on Jno. Chas. Baldinger, 42, Beaham Manor-rd., Thornton Heath, a buyer, formerly at Harrod's Stores, who threw himself over the railway bridge in front of an engine at Thornton Heath and was killed.—The evidence showed that Baldinger had suffered from influenza, and was much depressed.—Verdict, suicide during temporary insanity.—An inquest was held on Harry Frank Hine, engineer, at the L.B. and S.C.R., of Land-sea, Battersea, who was killed at East Croydon on Thursday evening by a light engine which ran over him as he was returning to his engine for his coat.—Verdict, accidental death.

BREACH OF PROMISE CASE.
At Birmingham Assizes, yesterday, Miss Florence Walton, shorthand writer and typist, brought an action for breach of promise against Mr. Jos. Fitter, who is connected with a manufacturing industry at Birmingham. In October, 1898, the parties became engaged. Last summer defendant promptly broke off the engagement, and counsel suggested the reason was that he had attained to a superior social position since first meeting plaintiff. The promise was not denied, and the jury awarded Miss Walton £200 damages. The report issued last night stated that 26 fresh cases of small-pox were notified yesterday in various parts of London.

LATEST TELEGRAMS.

CHILI AND ARGENTINE.
STATEMENT FROM AN ARGENTINE CONSUL.
Vienna, Dec. 14.—The Argentine Consul-General here, Herr Franzi, writes to "The Neue Freie Presse" that he has received a despatch from the Argentine Government to the effect that apprehensions as to a war with Chili were unfounded, as Chili appeared ready to accept all the just claims of the Argentine Government.—Reuter.

QUEEN WILHELMINA AND HER CONSORT.
The Hague, Dec. 14.—The Queen and Prince arriving at the Royal Palace to-day were greeted everywhere with the warmest enthusiasm. The scandal rumours have died out in the Press and amongst the public.—Central News.

MR. CARNEGIE'S £2,000,000 REFUSED.
Washington, Dec. 14.—President Roosevelt has definitely decided not to accept Mr. Carnegie's offer of 10,000,000 dollars in Steel Trust bonds for public educational purposes. The provision attached to the effect that the Government should hold the bonds for a term of years is regarded as being especially objectionable.—Reuter.

TERRIBLE FIRE AT HONG KONG.
Hong Kong, Dec. 14.—A terrible fire occurred in the Canton area to-day and extended over a large district. 800 houses were devastated, and the loss of life is enormous.—Central News.

COLD WAVE IN AMERICA.
New York, Dec. 14.—An intensely cold wave is advancing eastwards from the west. The front of the wave extended this morning from Northern Illinois south-westward to Arkansas, and the temperature in the district affected has fallen 40 to 50 degrees in 24 hours. In many places the mercury is much below zero, and some deaths from the extreme cold are reported. According to the Weather Bureau the cold at Chicago is the severest experienced for 25 years. Snow has fallen in some places, delaying traffic. The wave is expected to reach the Atlantic coast on Sunday.—Reuter.

ALLEGED EMBEZZLEMENT.
At Bow-st., yesterday, Jno. Wilkinson, clerk of Blackett-st., Putney, was charged with embezzling £190, received by him on behalf of his master, Jno. Taylor Graham, the London agent for Messrs. Gossage and Sons (Ltd.), soap manufacturers, Carlisle.—Prisoner was arrested yesterday at Watlington-st., W., and taken to Bow-st. Det.-sergt. Haynes, on the way to the station, said, "It has been going on for a very long time."—It was stated that the defalcations were much larger than the sum mentioned.—Formal evidence of arrest having been given, prisoner was remanded.

A PRISONER'S LAMENT.
Max Hugo Ferdinand Kruger, 33, apothecary, of Dartmouth-st., Nottingham, was brought up at Bow-st. yesterday, for extradition, charged with forgery and obtaining about 5,000 marks by false pretences at Breslau, Germany.—On Friday night Det.-sergt. Wegner and Palfrey arrested accused at his residence. When told the charge he said, "If I had known that a week ago I should have poisoned myself. I brought some morphia with me from Germany, but threw it away."—Remanded.

LONDON PRESS CLUB.
The monthly house dinner and smoking concert took place last night under the presidency of Mr. L. Lamberton (of Southampton). The entertainers included Messrs. S. Masters, J. Ridding, Haydn Wood (violinist), W. Tibbitt, Bob Hunt, A. Burdett, H. Saunders, W. Stockwell, T. Brandford, W. Fullerton, G. R. Parke, Medford Barrett, H. Hensley, and Prof. Cross (phonologist).

THE JOURNALISTS' INSTITUTE.
The London District of the N.I.J. has elected its officers for the coming year as follows:—Vice-chairman, J. Duckworth; Hon. Treasurer, F. J. Higginbottom; Hon. Sec., R. A. Northcott; Council: J. D. Irvine, J. N. Dunn, W. Collins, T. M. Rendle, W. M. Duckworth, H. E. Fennell, Walker, W. Senior, R. Northcott, A. F. Robbins, F. J. Millier, and C. Dren. Delegates to Conference: J. B. Atkinson, A. F. Robbins, J. C. Foulger, and A. H. Watson. General Committee: P. S. Bullen, A. Walter, H. E. Jewell, Bow-st. Spence, H. S. Mackay, M. H. Donohoe, W. T. Danke, A. E. Wain, M. H. Spielmann, and J. H. Heron.

NEW FIRE STATION.
Mr. J. D. Gilbert, chairman of the Fire Brigade Committee of the L.C.C., laid the foundation-stone yesterday of a new fire station, which is being erected in Euston-road. The station will cost when finished about £40,000, beside £11,000 for the site. It will provide accommodation for 17 men, three coaches, and an officer, besides separate quarters for the station officer and single and married men. The equipment will include a fire engine, horse-drawn, and hose cart, and six horses. Mr. Gilbert, laying the foundation-stone, believed that altogether it would be one of the most expensive stations the Council had yet erected in London.—Commander Wells also spoke, and a vote of thanks to Mr. Gilbert concluded the proceedings.

"WORKING MEN'S HOTEL."
Yesterday, Lady Wimburne opened a new "Working Men's Hotel" at Ames-st., Bethnal Green, in connection with the church of St. James the Less. The hotel is designed to provide entire living accommodation for about 75 men, and comprises a reading-room and kitchen. The vicar, the Rev. J. G. Watts-Ditchfield, explained that the total cost of the freshhold property was £1,900. The furniture and legal expenses had brought the total up to £2,700, of which £2,250 had been anonymously given by a lady. Subsequently a meeting was held at the new church building, when Lady Wimburne, the Hon. Ivor Guest, M.P., Prebendary Wace, and Canon Girdlestone delivered addresses.

Lotteries and horse-racing are prohibited at Pretoria from the beginning of the year.—Reuter.

EASTBOURNE TRAGEDY.

THE PAINTER AND THE TOBACCONIST'S DAUGHTER.
At Eastbourne yesterday, an inquest was held on Lawrence Osborne, 19, painter, of Auker-cres., Shepherd's Bush, who is alleged to have wounded a young woman named Alice Funnell, and to have afterwards shot himself, on Thursday evening. A letter written by deceased on the night before, or tragedy stated that he was married, or on the point of being married.—Deceased's father said the lad was known as "Charley," and was a teetotalist and earned good wages.—Henry Louis Coup gave evidence, showing that Osborne was very fond of Miss Funnell, who is the daughter of a tobacconist at Halesham.

MIDNIGHT VISIT.
One night, said witness, Osborne called at her house after midnight, and the young lady's father directed him to go away. Deceased had a revolver, and handed it over to Miss Funnell on Thursday week.—Mr. Oscar Funnell, father of Miss Funnell, said his daughter told him that deceased informed her that his own father had died and left him £2,000. The girl often threatened her life, but a little money always made matters right. Witness's wife found some opium and cartridges in their daughter's pocket. He (Mr. Funnell) spoke very strongly to the girl, who said she took them from "Charley."

THE LANDLADY'S EVIDENCE.
The landlady of the house in Ceylon-place next gave evidence, and stated that the young couple arrived at her residence on Wednesday evening and occupied the same room.—P.C. King right hand found the girl moaning. Her right hand was her left breast. A revolver was within two inches of the hand of deceased, whose head was resting against the girl's knee.—It was stated by the coroner that the girl was unlikely to be able to attend the court for some weeks, if she recovered.—Adjourned.

UNABLE TO SUPPORT "C.B."
Mr. H. G. Ware, a vice-president and a member of Salisbury Liberal Association, has resigned both positions on account of his inability to endorse the policy of Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman and the Radical party as at present constituted. He declares that if an election were to take place at present, he should support the Government. He objects not only to the South African policy of Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman, but also to the latter's declaration that he is still in favour of Irish Home Rule. Mr. Ware is a leading citizen and large employer of labour in Salisbury.

MR. IVOR GUEST, M.P., AND THE NAVY AND ARMY.
Mr. Ivor Guest, M.P., speaking last night at the annual dinner of the Three Towns Association, held at the Holborn Restaurant, said the toast of the Army and Navy was one to be regarded by us as of very practical and pressing importance. (Cheers.) There was a tendency of late not to consider the two services in connection with one another. Looking at the question from the broadest point of view, they were very closely connected, and we ought not to have any mistaken views as to their relative value and proportion of each. It often seemed to him that the amount of money we were able to spend at any given time upon our external expansion was determined upon two principles. First we looked abroad and we determined what our Imperial responsibilities were, and then we looked at home and saw what our resources were. These two principles gave us a certain result—that we were at any time able to spend a certain amount of money upon our Imperial defence. (Cheers.) The money, however, was equally divided amongst the Army and Navy.

THE NAVY WAS ESSENTIAL.
But the Army was somewhat of a luxury. If we were beaten in S. Africa it would be a humiliation, but not an Imperial disaster, as we should still have our Navy, through which we should be able to make ourselves heard in the councils of Europe. We should also look to the Navy as the first line of defence on which our Empire depended. In conclusion, he paid a tribute to the whole of the forces for the great part they had taken in the defence of the British Empire. (Applause.)—In responding to the toast of his health Mr. E. J. C. Morton, M.P., said that as long as the English Navy was strong, he would always have the deepest interest in the Three Towns. (Hear, hear.) He felt that those present represented a body of people in the capital of the British Empire who were gathered together from what he might almost call the very cradle of England.

DEATH OF BILLINGTON.
The death occurred at Bolton on Friday of Wm. Billington, the public executioner. Billington had been ailing for some time. He was unable to officiate at the double execution at Newcastle, his place being taken by his son, with an assistant. Deceased, who was 50, was appointed public executioner about 13 years ago, and had carried out a large number of executions all over the kingdom. He contracted a severe chill at the execution of Patrick Donohoe, a fellow prisoner of the Manchester, on the 14th of last month, and has since been indisposed. It is stated that Billington and McKenna were personal friends for many years.

BACK TO ZION.
Mr. Israel Zangwill was the chief speaker at a demonstration of the Jewish Federation, held last night at the Shoreditch Town Hall. Dr. Gaerster presided.—Mr. Zangwill moved a resolution declaring that Zionism was the only possible solution of the Jewish question. He read a letter from Mr. Hall Caine regretting the inability to be present, and said the letter expressed what he found Christians generally felt about this movement. If he went to Zion he was sure of finding sympathy with Zionism; if he went to Jews he was not so sure of receiving sympathy. He said that Zionism was a scattered people and again establish themselves in a nation, and it was futile to attempt to arrest the movement.—The resolution was carried.

TRAM-CAR ACCIDENT AT SOUTHEAST.
One of the Southeast electric trams came into collision last evening with a heavy cart laden with bricks. The driver's portion was knocked into the body of the car, injuring the driver and causing great consternation among the passengers, one of whom, a man named Cole, was terribly injured about the head. Cole lies in hospital in a critical condition.

THE VOLUNTEERS.

THE PRIZES.
The prizes won during the season by members of the 2nd London Rifles were presented last evening at the headquarters of the corps by the Lady Mayors, and the Lord Mayor attended in state, accompanied by Aid. and Sheriff Bell, Sheriff Marshall, and other civic officials. At Desford the prizes won by members of the 2nd B. V. West Kent Rifles were distributed by Mr. Evelyn, and a concert was given, at which Capt. T. Marchant presided. The annual report showed that the corps had an enrolment strength of 112 (all ranks), and in musketry a figure of merit of 123, there being 38 marksmen (as against 31 last year), of whom Col. Serret, McDonnell was the chief with a total of 100 points. Three members of the Co. are at present on active service in S. Africa, and Capt. O. S. Serret (Hon. Lieut. in the Co.) who took a draft to S. Africa and returned this year, after being about 12 months, was present last evening. The principal winners of prizes were: Col. Serret, 100 points; Capt. Marchant, 95; Capt. Gardner, 85; Capt. Toms, and Ptes. Court, Gamell, H. King, F. Williams, Osborne, Huntingford, Dawes, and Whalley.

The prizes won by the members of H. Co. of the London Irish Rifles were distributed at the Swallow Assembly Rooms, and the Lord Mayor presided. The prizes were: Capt. Parquharson, 100 points; Maj. Stephens, 95; Maj. Dalton, 90; Capt. Moore and Ryan, and Lieuts. Loftus and McDonnell. The annual report showed that the corps had an enrolment strength of 112 (all ranks), and in musketry a figure of merit was 133, and there were 49 marksmen, of whom Col. Serret was the chief, his aggregate being 100 points, and he and Pte. H. Young, Sergts. Morgan and Wright, Col.-sergt. Brown, and Ptes. Hickling, Barrett, Gentry, Cooper, and Shalley, all being prize-winners. The 2nd Sergt. Smith won the challenge cup for his most efficient section, and in regimental competitions the company won the Parquharson, and Daubney Challenge Cups. Capt. Parquharson, in addressing the company, said he joined issue with those who thought that the new corps was a mere regulation, for events had proved that the resources necessary to fulfil the military requirements were insufficient. The history of the corps was a matter of M. Co. of the 13th Middlesex Rifles. Capt. C. J. Jackson being in command, assisted by Lieuts. Berry and Gregory and Col.-sergt. Serret. The history of the corps was a matter of M. Co. of the 13th Middlesex Rifles. Capt. C. J. Jackson being in command, assisted by Lieuts. Berry and Gregory and Col.-sergt. Serret.

CROSS-COUNTRY RUNS.
The 2nd B. V. West Kent Rifles held a cross-country run over about five and a half miles of country in the vicinity of Wandsworth and Earlsfield. The pack was under the guidance of S. A. Sherwood. The race was a social run of five miles at Aston. H. F. Doby had charge of the 22 runners. The race horse finished thus:—H. L. Pryor, 1st; H. F. Doby, 2nd; H. L. Pryor, 3rd; H. F. Doby, 4th; H. L. Pryor, 5th; H. F. Doby, 6th; H. L. Pryor, 7th; H. F. Doby, 8th; H. L. Pryor, 9th; H. F. Doby, 10th; H. L. Pryor, 11th; H. F. Doby, 12th; H. L. Pryor, 13th; H. F. Doby, 14th; H. L. Pryor, 15th; H. F. Doby, 16th; H. L. Pryor, 17th; H. F. Doby, 18th; H. L. Pryor, 19th; H. F. Doby, 20th; H. L. Pryor, 21st; H. F. Doby, 22nd.

ROCKING.
Queen's Head Open Scratch Four.—Some 100 men were present at the above annual event, between the nine crews competing for Christmas prizes over the Westminster and Lambeth Bridges course. Result of final:—1. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 2. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 3. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 4. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 5. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 6. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 7. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 8. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 9. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 10. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 11. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 12. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 13. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 14. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 15. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 16. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 17. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 18. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 19. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 20. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 21. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 22. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 23. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 24. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 25. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 26. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 27. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 28. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 29. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 30. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 31. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 32. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 33. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 34. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 35. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 36. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 37. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 38. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 39. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 40. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 41. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 42. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 43. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 44. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 45. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 46. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 47. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 48. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 49. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 50. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 51. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 52. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 53. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 54. G. W. Burgess, 4 min 20 sec; 55. G. W. 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**"THE PEOPLE"
MIXTURE.**

In London 2,374 births and 1,654 deaths were registered last week. The births were 152, and the deaths 61, below the average.

The annual death-rate per 1,000 from all causes, which has been 20.22, 3, and 29.5, in the preceding three weeks, further fell last week to 19.5.

The 1,636 deaths included 16 from small-pox, 40 from measles, and 10 from diphtheria.

Eighteen forms of violence caused deaths, concerning all but two of which inquests were held.

Of these 71 deaths, 11 were cases of suicide and one of homicide, while the remaining 59 were attributed to accident or negligence.

In Greater London 3,454 births and 2,374 deaths were registered, corresponding to annual rates of 27.5 and 17.9 per 1,000 of the estimated population.

The deaths registered last week in the 33 great towns corresponded to an annual rate of 19.5 per 1,000 of the aggregate population, which is estimated at 11,463,028 persons in the middle of this year.

A Hungarian Deputy has caused sensation by declining to fight a duel on conscientious grounds.

Ten British brewers have an annual output exceeding one million gallons and 14 others brew over half a million.

It is said that no one is inclined to give evidence against the brigand M. Solino, and that his trial is delayed consequence.

The cost of the Berlin High Level and Underground Railway, which now finished, is estimated at £1,750,000.

A "Royalist" colony for those "Eagle" inclinations who intend emigrating to America "is talked of in the States.

An old woman is receipt of outdoor relief from the Bermondsey Board of Guardians has been found to possess a bank account with £50 to her credit.

A Lisbon lady was being carried when a cry from the coffin disclosed that she was still alive. Fifteen hours afterwards she died from fright.

The Home Office is actively considering means of preventing relapses among patients discharged from lunatic hospitals.

The collection at Stockport Sunday School on Sunday evening raised £500, a record for that the largest Sunday school in the kingdom.

Voluntary services in connection with the C.E.T. Benefit Society will be held to-day at 3.30 p.m. in Camden Town Parish Church, Camden-st., N.

The Bishop of London will preach at the annual meeting of the Central Mission, at Abchurch-lane, to-morrow.

During November the officers of Fishmongers' Co. condemned as unfit for human food 32 tons, 4 cwt. 1 lb. of fish at Billingsgate Market, representing one ton in about 455 tons.

The promoters of the London-Brighton electric railway announce that they will take passengers from Piccadilly to Brighton, over 47 m. through 14 tunnels, in 32 minutes.

Swift Johnson, a hawker, was sentenced to five years' penal servitude for Guildford for wounding Amos Dyer by attacking him with a bar, at Chertsey.

A G.W. signalman at Didcot, near Holt, 48, while stepping out of the engine of a train was knocked down and killed by an express, his body being badly mutilated.

For sending tuberculosis beef to Central London Market, Saml. St. farmer, of Crockford Bridge Lane, Addlestone, near Chertsey, was, at Guildhall, fined £25, with £25 cos.

At the final meeting of the general committee of the London County Council, secretaries reported that the hon. secretary amounted to £11,546, as compared with £11,490 for the previous festival.

Mr. H. Rendall, J.P., head of firm of Rendall and Combs, one of the oldest net and twine manufacturers of Bridport, and well-known throughout the country, fell dead this week.

was aged 82.

A verdict of suicide during temporary insanity was returned in the case of Thos. Williams, who hanged himself in a cell after being remanded on an assault charge at the North London Police Court.

Mr. G. Mellin's offer to place at the disposal of the London & Wales's General Fund for London's pauper children Mellin's Food equivalent in value to £10,000, to be distributed among London Hospitals at the rate of £25 worth per annum, has been accepted.

The Barcelona police have so far failed to unravel the mystery in connection with the Englishman formerly crowned there on Nov. 27. He was of stature, had a white beard and hair, a well-developed chest, and had no name save Y. Dodd.

Two of the 400 inscribed clay tablets found by the German expedition in the centre of Babylon are said to contain "pearls of Babylonian literature." One of them contains a great part of the celebrated compendium which claims the Babylonian cuneiform characters.

France's youngest actress, Suzanne, 34 years, makes the part of little boy in M. Mezet's opera, "Le Petit Mousquetaire."

One day Massenet encountered her exclaimed, "You have done so exceedingly well." "Yes," said child, with an artist's composure, "felt it."

A novel competition is to be held at the Garrick Theatre during the Christmas matinees of "The Hunchback of Notre Dame." The children of audience are invited to dress and resemble in every detail the characters in the play. Prizes will be given by the votes of the children in audience.

Geo. Latham, a Preston pawnbroker, was committed for trial on a charge of causing the death of his wife, Ellen. He was, it was alleged, a drunken habitué, and had caused the death of his wife while she was lying from heart disease, by throwing her into the street at 2 a.m., clad in her nightdress.

At all seasons of the year 5 a.m. is the coldest hour of the day.

There are 48 different kinds of house-fly known and classified.

Water is 820 times heavier than air.

A pint of water weighs a fraction over 1 lb.

Germany has 4,324 field-guns to France's 648.

New York City has 40,000 more women than men.

Australia sent 8,000 men to South Africa, Canada 5,000.

France pays England about £160,000 a year in cable rent.

There are 129,000 English freemen and 2,320 lodges.

A pound of silver means 13 1-3th crowns, or 264 three-penny-bits.

A "great" pound of silk means a pound and a half avoirdupois.

Pickled cod is sold by the barrel, but hooked cod always by the score.

Of the two students France has had only one has served a full term.

A Glasgow steamship, which had to be towed 480 miles, had to pay £4,800, or £10 a mile, for assistance.

The darabonka, or Turkish drum, resembles a long vase, the bottom being covered with parchment.

Backboned people of China still use the bow and arrow as a weapon, and do very effective work therewith.

One of the minor expenses of an ordinary locomotive consists of 100 gallons of lubricating oil a year.

A bushel of good wheat should weigh fully 60 lb., and a bushel of oak leaf 7 lb.

There were 1,263 Jewish marriages in London last year, and 468 in the provinces.

Any hard steel tool will cut glass when kept wet with camphor dissolved in turpentine.

In Queen Elizabeth's time the death rate of England was 80 per 1,000. Now it is 19 per 1,000.

Of London proper 33,405 acres are covered with buildings, 6,445 are parks, and 15,500 acres vacant land.

The longest recorded hair of a woman's head is eight, but a hair 12 ft. long has been noted in a man's beard.

The new travelling lighthouse on Dover Admiralty Pier extension works was lit for the first time this week.

A full-dress uniform for a British Cabinet Minister is said to cost about £150.

The ordinary rate of the Thames current is 18 1/2 feet a minute; that of the Rhine is 540 feet.

At a recent scientific fest a worker in metal succeeded in drawing a penny out into 5,700 feet of wire.

For the last 80 years our Mint has averaged 45, in the pound profit on coining silver, but none on gold.

The stevedore on Sautted States coinage is six pained, while the United States flag carries five-pointed stars.

100,000 bales of cotton fed the Lancashire mills for a year a century ago. A similar amount now lasts them a day and a quarter.

Brazilian carbon, which is worth about four times the value of ordinary and is disponded in used for drilling in some of the South African gold mines.

Cotton-spinners are saving 5s. a bale on the carriage of cotton by having it sent straight to Manchester by the Ship Canal.

If a sitting of eggs has arrived from a distance they should always be kept for 24 hours before putting them under a hen.

MR. G. EXPLAINS.

I know that Mr. G. is afraid of his wife. He doesn't know it. I imagine he has the same idea about me, but there is one thing in my favour, I'm not afraid of any other man's wife. Hurrah!

He told me a story, he affected to treat it humourously, about his excuse why he was a little late about the time, on the authority of the late lamented Shakspeare, that the dog bays at the moon. I don't know what makes a dog turn himself into a bay, but, however, that's another matter.

He started the birthday dodge. Ah! gentle and matrimonised peruser of these lines, have you ever, when you've been late, started the ancient story of meeting a man who was keeping up his birthday? Hush! the wives are watching us closely. Let us dissemble. I think we have all met that man with a birthday.

I have set G.'s story down; he was coward enough not to give Mrs. G.'s remarks. But I have guessed at them. I've heard them so many times from other lips.

It was rather late when Mr. G. arrived home, it had been a light merry sort of evening, and not till Mr. G. had arrived on the domestic doormat, and had missed the keyhole twice, after laughing in a vagrant manner at his mistaken efforts, did it suddenly strike him that he had promised to meet Mrs. G. at five. Then the hitherto misty landscapes cleared up, the lamp-posts stood out with startling distinctness, the moon stopped wallowing, and the roofs and gables stood out against the sky like a sharply-cut silhouette. Mr. G. sat down on the step. The step struck cold and the clock struck two at the same time, and he wiped a perspiring brow. An unimaginative brow with a huge bandanna handkerchief. What idea could he strike? Ah! it sprang up again bedecked with perennial youth—the birthday story.

He crawled upstairs, every stair creaking with a fenshish welcoming joy, and crept like an overdone burglar into the room.

The gas was alight there was an ominous silence and three or four curlers loomed over the edge of the bed-doths with sinister meanings.

Mr. G. took off his coat as though he had fairy hands and sat on the edge of the bed, thump in the back from an indignant female foot sent him sprawling into the fireplace. "My dear!" he remonstrated. "Don't 'dear' me, it takes off your boots—(so to voice, if you can)—in the armchair." Really, he ejaculated Mrs. G. "I dare say you are, come the caustic reply. Then the colossal he sprang up. "I say, my dear, do you know what has delayed me and kept me out late?" said Mr. G. in a trembly voice imbedded in whisky. "Drink," was the prompt reply. "My dear, my dear!" said Mr. G. "Not much of the 'dear' you hold me too cheap for that sort of nonsense," remarked Mrs. G.'s voice still under the bed-clothes. "Well, not Tommy Tittlemouse. It was his birthday!" said Mr. G., gasping at the flight of fancy. "Don't know the wretch. A man with a name like that lives up the street at 94, and asked me out late at night, ought—ought to be strangled," said Mrs. G. viciously. "How ridiculous! I've mixed the names up, my dear; I mean Mrs. Bonny Littlehouse—you know," said Mr. G. artfully—"the man that used to admire you so much—the man that lives up the street at 94, and asked me, if you were my eldest daughter. You had a very funny evening together. Now, Mrs. G., is some four years older than Mr. G., and these words brought the Hyde's curlers into an erect position, and Mrs. G. sat bolt upright in bed. "Well, if it's funny," said she. "I'm prepared to swear to it." Her expression of face which bore appearance of having been carefully prepared for some years, as a refrigerator, somewhat chilled Mr. G.'s warmth of feeling. However, he struggled on. "Well, my love, would you believe, he was only—fancy, only 43," said Mr. G., looking at himself in a worried manner. "Yes, I should," said Mr. G. "Why?" cautiously queried the artful Mr. G. "Oh, for a simple reason," said Mrs. G. "Ah, because he is a bit bald on top," said Mr. G. waggishly. "No; I've never seen him," said Mrs. G. This remark Mr. G. smothered in the rug, and shattered the waterbottle into a host of fragments. "Oh, you must have seen him. He took off his hat—you know that charming way of his"—Mr. G., in lifting up the waterbottle to illustrate Bonny's charming manner, poured half a pint of the cold water down Mrs. G.'s head, and the sound which made his teeth rattle like a pair of castanets. "I don't recollect him in any way, so many men lift their hats," said Mrs. G. sweetly. "Oh, but don't you recollect him meeting you with me one morning, and saying 'looking at myself in a worried manner'?" "No, my dear, I can't," said Mr. G., in a far-away sort of five novellette for a penny voice. "Oh!" ejaculated Mr. G., staring very hard at his wife and in his perplexity stroking the back of his head with the waterbottle.



my age, and I to guess his.
"You're 22, I said." "Put that water-
bottle down," interrupted Mrs. G.
"One moment," resumed Mr. G.
"You're wrong," said he, "I'm a bit
under." "What are you talking
about?" exclaimed Mrs. G. And
thereafter about like an Indian club,
and who looked 22?" "One little
minute, my dear. Lor, how funny.
I've mixed young Smith up with dear
old Sonny, that I met earlier in the
evening; what else did I say he was
my dear?" "I don't recollect," Mr.
G. answered Mrs. G.

The deceased was playing a
pool game, but he gave one desperate
plunge. "Yes, I have it. I guessed
he was 45, and he told me he was 34."
"I don't believe there is a Mr. Rommy
Mittelpunch. I don't believe there's
been a birthday anywhere. There's no
94 in Bliss-avenue, but there's one
thing I do believe, you're the most
terrific liar I've ever run—put that
water bottle down!" And a stern
fingert arose above the recumbent
form of the deceived lady, and
beckoned her partner to turn out the
gas and retire to rest. The birthday
story had failed in another home once
more.

CHRIS.

"LOVE MAD."

EXTRAORDINARY INFATUATION
OF A YOUNG WOMAN.

Dr. Westcott held an inquest at
Hackney on Ann Wilson, 26, domestic
servant, late of Bellway road, Clapton.
—The mother of the girl, who has daugh-
ter been in a situation in Becken-
ham for three months, but on Nov. 30
returned home, and said her mistress
had given her notice to leave.—Coroner:
Why? She said she was in love
with a young man named Sid, a
bicycle maker.—Could not she be in
love and keep her situation? Yes, but
her mistress would not let her go, so
in fact could not answer the door or
do her work. Witness added that de-
ceased kept writing letters at home
and drinking tea, but ate very little.
—Who did she write the letters too?
A young man named Jack, a friend of
Sid's; she did not know where Sid
lived.

AFTER THE DEFT ON WRITING LETTERS

and tearing them up, saying "That
won't do." She appeared strange in
her manner, and threatened to drown
herself, and on one occasion said she
would cut her throat. Witness locked
up the knives then, and took deceased
about as much as possible in order to
distract her attention from the love
affair. Early on Sunday deceased left
the house with nothing to tell to
anybody, and later on her body was
found in the Lee. Deceased said she
had known Sid for 3½ years, but never
knew where he lived.—Coroner: That
seems strange.—Witness added that
her married daughter, Mrs. Jackson,
wrote to a Mr. Mathew, asking Sid to
write and say whether he was any-
thing worth marrying or not, and received
the following reply:

A MATTER-OF-FACT LETTER.

I am this morning in receipt of your un-
dated letter, but am at a loss to know why I
am thus to be annoyed and troubled over the
little affairs of a person started to your sister
by telegram, since we have scarcely taken any
relations as far as she knew. I have told
her both verbally and in writing that I didn't
know the address of the young man she called
himself Sid. It therefore seems to me that as
farther in the matter. I must request you to
plainly tell her that if she persists in annoy-
ing me or my friends personally, or by letter
or telegram, she will be completely taken
to hand her over to the proper authorities,
that the state of her mind may be inquired
into. Allow me to point out to you the un-
wisdom of sending me such a letter, and send
for your sister, she is nothing to him,
and why should he be thus bothered? If she
was fool enough to fall in love with him, she
must fall for him.

A BUNDLE OF LETTERS.

—Mr. Walter Mathew, of Beckenham,
stated that he wrote the above letter
in consequence of his having received a
large number of letters from deceased,
all having reference to Sid, who was a
friend of witness's son. Witness pro-
duced a bundle of letters he had re-
ceived from deceased, one of which
the coroner read, as follows:

My dear Sid (deceased) had been cross
—It is time to the 11th letter to you! Is
this time you will say I am not worthy to be
anything but what I have made myself over
my love for you, be all appearance, a bad
person. I told you so long when I saw you
Beckenham. I have a mother and six sisters
but I cannot be seen, and all the waters
and streams, and I have got a lot of trouble
night in all my life with one of them.
I was born in a city and was so weak I was
taken to a hospital and kept there till I was
18 years old, and I have got a lot of trouble
there till I was 18. On leaving the hospital
my mother was sent for, and that was the
first time in my life I had seen her. I was
so weak, I always felt so weak. Not say
anything on this earth will come from doing
that. I love you so much, I want to see
you every day, and I hope you will not ask
me to stop loving you. I will not stop lov-
ing you. The letter was not signed, but on the top
were the words "If you can find him, call me
sweet". To be killed by your hands would be
sweet.

Witness asked that that was
ONLY A SAMPLE
of the letters, and he thought it time
the nuisance ceased.—Solney Fisher
of Upper Sydenham, stated that he
had known deceased for two summers
and had spoken to her a dozen times,
but there had never been any pretence
of love on his part.—Coroner: What
made her take such a violent fancy to
somebody whom I hardly think she could
have noticed? He said he did not call
any notice of the annoyance at first,
but when it continued I went over to
their place one day on business and gave
her a good talking to. Next day she
sent a letter to Mr. Mathew.

A FRANTIC EPISTLE.

—The coroner read the letter, as fol-
lows:—

O, Mr. Mathew, I can't, I won't give you
his name, he alarmed, he feared, and during
the stormy night I began to cry. It really
is because I don't see enough of him.
I would not ask him to stay, as we do not know
his name. Ask him to call any day he has
time, and I will be glad to see him, but
not at his own sight, as I always thought
should I hope you could find me writing
you, I have no need to write to you. I
will not stop loving you, I will not stop
loving you. He need not see me his name if I
don't think I'm worthy. I am cold and re-
flected, and know now what I'm doing. I
will not stop loving you, I will not stop
alone proved he said. Tell him I won't
marry him tomorrow if he asked. He called
me a fanatic; how I love to thank my eyes
for him.

Other evidence showed that deceased
was seen 12 AM on the river.

"IN THE SWIM."
BY A CITY SLAVE.

Saturday, 2 p.m.

MONEY.

Money has been in fair demand during the week in Lombard-st. Requirements for the settlement naturally cleared the market of the bulk of available supplies, and several railways are likely to be faced. The Bank is in control of the position, and rather heavy has been demanded for settlement money and short loans were raff as a fortnight ago. The end of the year's requirements has helped to strengthen the position of lenders who are by no means avaricious in the way of raising money. The Bank now shows a rise of £38,000 in the reserve, while the proportion of reserves to liabilities has advanced to 4 to 1.

HOME RAILS.

The Home Railway market has been comparatively quiet and uninteresting. The one feature has been the Undergrounds Metropolitan and Metropolitan Districts, which are about to be merged. The award of the Board of Trade, which is in favour of Districts, has been well received by the market, possibly because it is understood that Mr. Yerkes is in a position to immediately proceed with the electrification of this line. Traffic have been on the increase during the last few months, and it has been infinitesimal. London Electric shares, namely the "Tuppence Tube" and City and South London, have come in for a very considerable measure of support, the latter being rather well bought by investors in anticipation that the extension of the line will result in a marked increase of receipts.

AMERICAN RAILS.

Wall-st. has been thoroughly surprised by the copper debacle, and the anxiety has been materially increased by the fact that loan money has more than sufficient to be rushed to an almost infinitesimal price. The market has been in a condition, and have given rise to very considerable anxiety on the other side, and have combined with the circumstances mentioned above to limit speculative activity. On this side Unions are being bought, but, as I pointed out a few days ago, it is somewhat unsafe for any speculation attempts to follow the movements in this market. The market has been decided selling going to New York, both in the case of Norfolk and New York Centrals, and it is probable that lower prices in the market will prevail. No general decline, however, likely to take place in the market, seeing that both the New York and Gould groups are lending support.

FOREIGN GOVERNMENT SECURITIES.

In this section very little has been doing. The possibilities of trouble between Argentina and Chili have caused a somewhat uneasy feeling regarding South American securities. In Brazil, however, the market has been disturbed by the prospect that the last-mentioned issues are considered good in well-informed quarters, and of late there has been an influential buying recorded. Government securities have been quiet. Both Italian and Spanish issues have been supported, first of all in London and subsequently in the continent. There has been an inclination to dispose of Russian Fours, on the various reports with regard to the financial position of the Empire, but, owing to the offer of support accorded to these stocks in London and elsewhere, practically no change can be recorded in prices.

INDUSTRIALS.

In Industrial business there has been a disinclination to take new business. The selling of South African Cold Storage shares has apparently an attempt on the part of bears to depress the price. To a certain extent this has succeeded, but it is probable that the strong buying of the financial position of the company these gentlemen will find themselves "left" at the finish. At the same time I should be disinclined to advise a purchase of these shares. I have no doubt those who follow my hint of a recent date have no need to regret having done so. The fact that the market has been rather unattractive, but the decline in Vickers has caused some surprise in the market. Iron and Steel discounts have been featureless, apart from some buying of Vickers, Sons, Maxims, and Cotton issues have been idle.

MINES.

The mining carry-over presents difficulty, although "bears" of the Californians have some heavy differences. There was a "back" of 1-1/2 Lake Views and 5 per cent. on the Peru Perseverance. The Kafir market retains a strong tendency to be somewhat favourable to the rapid accumulation of crushing by the leasurers. Chief support is still given to gold shares and deeper levels, at which Robinsons, Simmer and Mendeeps, Deep, Nourse, Deep, and Deep, Deep, Deep, and Durban have been prominent. Rand Mafeking, Rand, Goldfields, Anglo-French and Barnato Company mark important rises. In Western Lake Views were at first very firm "bear" closing, the price very much touching 74. Since the meeting, however, they have fallen back to 66. Boulder Perseverance has been prominent on the market, but the African were depressed by the fact that the second crushing from the Sanou mine did not come up to expectations. But this has been satisfactorily explained, and the tone is now better. Mr. Chamberlain has planned that his letter only referred to the price of the other shares. The price of shares have been steadily bought by the public during the last week and immediately after the settlement the buying was renewed. Pretoria, Hartebeest, and Kumsasi have been in steady demand. Kumsasi is being bought chiefly by the collector of the Cape. The market in London regarding the mines made on Duxbury property, which, according to official statements, is shaping extremely well, thus assaying at two ounces to the ton, and advanced a purchase of these shares when they stood at 6s. and 6s. 6d.

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INDIGESTION.

YOU ARE UNDOUBTEDLY SUFFERING FROM INDIGESTION if afflicted with any or all of the following symptoms:—

Pain after Eating,
Fluctuating Appetite,
Flatulence,
Nausea,
Impoverished Blood,
Biliousness,
Disturbance after Meals,
Heart Palpitation,
Shortness of Breath,
Sallow Skin,
Constipated Bowels,
Depression of Spirits,
Occasional Headaches,
Hoarseness,
Disturbed Sleep,
Disinclination
to Exercise,
Constipation,
Waterbrash,
Sour Stomach,
Sluggish Liver.

GUY'S TONIC

is a Specific for Indigestion and all its attendant disorders. By removing the cause the troubles and some symptoms enumerated above speedily disappear. This gratifying result is secured because Guy's Tonic actually performs some of the Digestive work itself, and so strengthens and invigorates the Stomach that it is able to carry on its processes without assistance. Health means first of all good Digestion. No necessary task to take Guy's Tonic at once!

THE FOLLOWING CERTIFICATE CARRIES INDIGESTION OF TWENTY YEARS STANDING, WITH PAIN AFTER FOOD, LOSS OF APPETITE, AND LOSS OF SLEEP, WAS COMPLETELY CURED BY GUY'S TONIC.—

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"I have been married twenty years and for the greater part of that time my Wife has suffered from Indigestion, and has not been able to eat any other food except stoup, and that only sparingly. She has tried all sorts of medicines without any lasting results, and one of the leading Doctors in this city told her she was always be Dyspeptic. Her Appetite failed, and she began to lose flesh. I can across one of your advertisements in which a similar case was mentioned, and I at once got a bottle of Guy's Tonic. I took another, and now have the satisfaction of saying that Guy's Tonic put her right, and her Appetite is such that she can eat a dry crust with relish. I think Guy's Tonic only wants to become more widely known to be highly appreciated, all who suffer from Indigestion and kindred ailments."
"R. W. HOBBSMAN."

"QUITE CURED HER."

Mr. A. J. CRAWB writes from 41, Upper Tri Hill, London, S.W.:—

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SAVE TWO-THIRDS OF YOUR GAS BILL AND OBTAIN THREE TIMES THE LIGHT

WELSBACK MANTLE

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To get the enormous increase of light which Kern burner gives the ordinary burner would cost over 40s. per year.

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